Kemono no Souja
The Beast Player

VOLUME 2 - CHAPTER 3, PART 1

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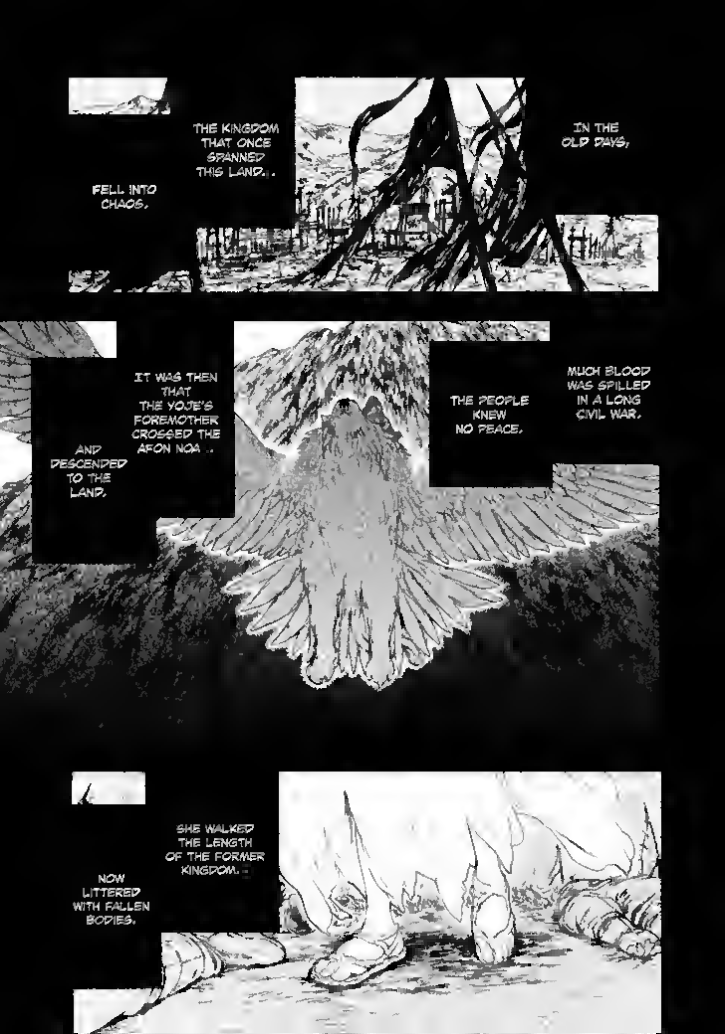

IN THE OLD DAYS,
THE KINGDOM THAT ONCE SPANNED THIS LAND...
FELL INTO CHAOS.
MUCH BLOOD WAS SPILLED IN A LONG CIVIL WAR.
THE PEOPLE KNEW NO PEACE.
IT WAS THEN THAT THE YOJE'S FOREMOTHER CROSSED THE AEON NOA...
AND DESCENDED TO THE LAND.
SHE WALKED THE LENGTH OF THE FORMER KINGDOM...
NOW LITTERED WITH FALLEN BODIES.

OVERHEAD, HOSTS OF UNTAMEABLE OHJU SPREAD THEIR WINGS,
AS THOUGH TO PROTECT HER,
WHEN SHE SAILED DOWN THE RIVER, TOHDA BOWED THEIR HEADS AND MADE WAY FOR HER.

JE, THE YOJE'S FOREMOTHER, WAS TALL, WITH GOLDEN EYES AND SHIMMERING HAIR.
AFTER JUST A GLIMPSE...
OF HER DIVINE, HALLOWED COUNTENANCE,
THE PEOPLE THREW THEMSELVES AT HER FEET AND IMPLORED HER NOT TO LEAVE THEM.

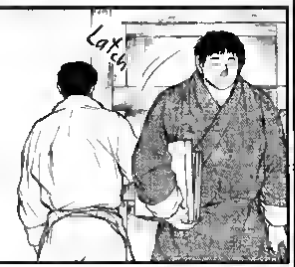
SHE HEEDED THEIR WISH...
TO REBUILD THE FOUNDATION OF THE COUNTRY
AND REMAINED ON EARTH...
THUS BEGAN THE HOLY REALM OF RYOZA.

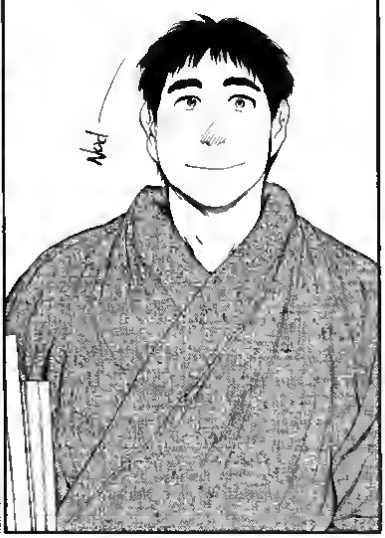
Chapter 3 part 1

Ja-lu the Swift

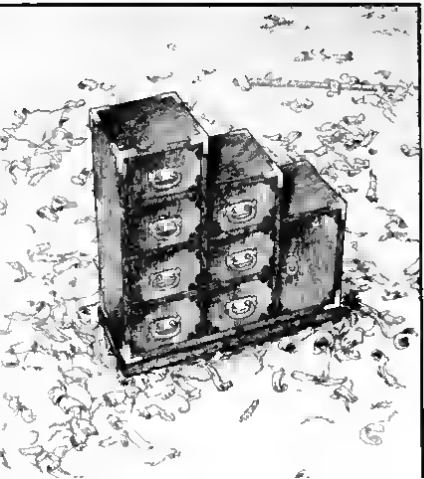
SWISH
RUB
RUB
RUB
RUB

KNOCK KNOCK
IT'S YANTOKU, THE CABINET-MAKER
I HAVE YOUR PACKAGE
CREAK
PUSH
...


Latch


Mod

THUD



CAUTIOUS AS EVER, AIN'T YOU, IA-LU

I DIDN'T SEE NOBODY AROUND
OH

GOOD JOB.
THEY'LL BELIEVE ME IF I SAY I MADE IT
AND YOU AIN'T EVEN A PRO-FESSIONAL

IT'S BECAUSE I'M NOT...
THAT I CAN AFFORD THE TIME...
TO MAKE MY WORK PRESENTABLE.

HEY
THIS HERE LITTLE CABINET CAN FETCH TEN GOLDS, BUT ALLS YOU EVER ASK FOR IS RAW MATERIALS
WHAT A WASTE
YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT THE MONEY?

I DON'T MAKE THINGS...
FOR MONEY
I DO IT OUT OF LOVE
AND...
IF IT PROFITS YOU, ALL THE BETTER
BESIDES,
THE WORLD I LIVE IN...
SEES EMOTIONS AS WEAKNESSES
YES, SOMETHING TO DRAG YOU DOWN
IF MY ENEMIES GOT WIND OF OUR FRIENDSHIP,
THEY'D COME AFTER YOU AND YOUR FAMILY...
BEST KEEP YOUR DISTANCE FROM ME...
IF YOU VALUE THEIR LIVES...

*The name given to the royal guard, meaning "firm shield."

THAT DAY, WE WERE TAKIN' THEIR LUNCHES TO 'EM, THE SAME AS ALWAYS.
THAT WORKED AT THE SAME PLACE.
OUR PAS WERE CABINET-MAKERS...
ME AND IA-LU GREW UP TOGETHER, ALMOST LIKE BROTHERS. WE LIVED IN ONE OF THE POOR ARTISAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE CITY'S BACK STREETS.
SLIP
TOPPLE
?!
UWAA AAAH AHH!
RUMBLE RUMBLE RUMBLE
CLATTER CLATTER CLATTER
UGH...
OOF
SWOOSH

HOW OUR PAS' WORKSHOP CAME CRASHIN' DOWN.
WE SAW WITH OUR OWN EYES...
GASP
IA-LU!
I'M GONNA FIND THE HEALER!
IA-LU!
WAIT!
UGH.
I CAN'T CATCH UP!
HUFF
HUFF

THUMP
Rattle Rattle Rattle
...WHEN IA-LU REACHED THE END OF THE MAIN STREET...
CLATTER
NEIGHH

WOOSH
LEAP
LAND
...!!
I WASN'T THE ONLY WITNESS...
TO HIS AMAZING FEAT.
HE VISITED LU'S HOME FIVE DAYS LATER,
RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF LU'S FUNERAL.
AS LUCK HAD IT, ONE OF THE GEKI-ZAN WAS THERE TO SEE IT, TOO.

HE SAYS TO HER,
"IF YOU ALLOW US TO TRAIN IA-LU FOR THE SEH-ZAN YOU AND YOUR FAMILY WILL NEVER GO HUNGRY FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIVES."
IA-LU'S MA DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. HER HUSBAND WAS GONE, ALONG WITH THE MONEY HE PROVIDED.

THEY GET RANKS, WHICH MAKE 'EM EQUAL TO THEM NOBLES BUT THEY AIN'T ALLOWED TO MARRY OR SEE THEIR FAMILIES, NEITHER. THEY'RE, WELL, THEY'RE LONE WARRIORS.
TO BE THEIR LIVIN' SHIELDS.
THE SEH-ZAN LIVE TO GUARD THE YOJE AND HER FAMILY

IA-LU DIDN'T CRY.
IA-LU'S MA HAD NO OTHER CHOICE.
TWELVE YEARS WENT BY...
UNTIL, BY PURE CHANCE, WE MET AGAIN.
Ah!

DON'T GO!
I WON'T TELL NOBODY, PROMISE!
WAIT!
!

I CAN TELL YOU ABOUT YOUR FAMILY.

MY NEXT DAY OFF IS TEN DAYS FROM NOW. COME THEN.
FLAP
YOU KEPT IN TOUCH WITH ME?
YOU STILL SORRY...
IA-LU,

I DON'T NEED NO REMINDIN'.
I KNOW THAT.
BUT DON'T TELL HIM MY NAME
YOU CAN BRING YOUR APPRENTICE ALONG
...

Flap
Rustle
Rustle
YES
YOU.
LEAVE FOR WORK AT THIS HOUR?

BE CAREFUL ON YOUR WAY HOME
YAN-TOKU,
AYE.

Hey!
CLAMOR
CLAMOR
Tsk
...
Turn
Step
Step
...
HEY.
Step
Step
Step
Step

I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP ANY-WAY
TSK
HEART-LESS
YOU'RE GOING TO PRETEND YOU DIDN'T SEE THAT?
...
DON'T, KAIL.
GRAB
HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT HAPPENED TO OSSAR?
WE'RE NEVER OFF DUTY
IT'S MY DAY OFF
YOU CAN'T STOP ME

*The Bloodstained

KICK
Damn it!
...!
Stomp Stomp
I'M SICK OF LIVING LIKE THIS.

WHAT?
BEING A SEH-ZAN REQUIRES COMMITMENT AND DEVOTION.
THEN BREAK YOUR VOWS.
IT WILL ONLY BECOME A BURDEN.
THERE'S NO POINT IN KEEPING YOUR POST IF YOUR HEART'S NOT IN IT.
WELL...

...
HOW DO YOU...
FEEL...
ABOUT IT?

I...
I'VE TAKEN TOO MANY LIVES...
TO HAVE ANY DOUBTS

WHILE GUARDING THE YOJE,
HE'S KILLED MORE ASSASSINS THAN ANYONE.
IA-LU THE SWIFT.

TO HEAR ALL THAT...
FROM HIS MOUTH...

Kemono no Souja